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Chairman: Mr. Yousfi ..... (Algeria)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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Agenda item 123: Human resources management (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 123: Human resources management (*continued*) (A/61/201, A/61/228, A/61/255 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/61/257 and Add.1-3, A/61/274, A/61/319 and A/61/537)

1. **Mr. Kisambira** (President of the New York Staff Union) said that in response to the Secretary-General's report "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692) the New York Staff Union had prepared a report on human resources issues containing specific proposals and an assessment of the state of staff-management relations in the Secretariat. The decision to withdraw from the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC) had been taken by the staff at large in 2003 after the Staff Union had identified 127 SMCC agreements which had not been implemented by the Administration. Staff representatives in SMCC were presented with finished products that left no room for negotiation. Indeed, it appeared that their mere presence in that forum was all that the Administration required to meet its obligation under chapter VIII of the Staff Rules to consult with the staff. The role of the staff representatives had become meaningless because in the absence of accountability, the Administration implemented only those agreements which it saw fit. The arrangements for staff-management negotiations were clearly obsolete.

2. The staff took very seriously the oft-repeated assertion that the staff was the Organization's most valuable asset. The brief of the staff representatives was to work in partnership with the Administration and Member States to reinvigorate the staff, especially in the context of reforms that might affect the staff's rights. The success of human resources management reform depended to a large extent on the active support of all three stakeholders. Unfortunately the current climate in the Secretariat did not provide a basis for attaining the ambitious goals of the reform. The Staff Union agreed with the conclusions on the lack of management accountability set out in paragraph 13 of the report of the Redesign Panel on the United Nations system of administration of justice (A/61/205).

3. The Staff Union acknowledged the benefits of mobility but, in the absence of an effective system of justice, the proposals contained no safeguards against the use of mobility as a punishment and no protection for staff with family, medical or other work/life issues. It would be premature to take any decision on the question before the issuance of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) due in 2007.

4. With regard to contractual arrangements the New York Staff Union disagreed emphatically with the other members of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) that it was an acceptable compromise to replace the permanent contract with the continuing contract. The permanent contract was vital to the independence of the international civil service and career security was in turn integral to ethical conduct and the attainment of the Organization's goals.

5. There was a need for further review of the staff selection and placement system, for the new system invested greater authority in programme managers at the expense of the central review bodies, again rendering the role of the staff representatives meaningless. Recruitment decisions were too important to be left to individual managers, especially in the absence of effective accountability arrangements and a robust justice system. Before commenting on the proposals to harmonize the conditions of service of field staff, the Staff Union would await the findings of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) due in 2007.

6. A number of the Secretary-General's reform proposals were positive, but they could not be implemented successfully in the absence of an independent system of internal justice. At its twenty-seventh session SMCC had recommended the convening of an extraordinary meeting in 2007 with a view to the submission of joint comments on the report of the Redesign Panel. But the Panel had already conducted wide consultations, in accordance with its terms of reference from the General Assembly, and its report had been fully endorsed by CCISUA and the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA).

7. **Ms. Banks** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that the Secretary-General was to be commended for his efforts to consult with staff representatives before issuing his proposals on human resources management reform, the general direction of which was welcome. The increasing challenges facing the United Nations underscored the need to make the best use of its investment in people.

The Secretary-General should proceed to implement the initiatives requiring no further action by the General Assembly.

8. The Secretary-General shared the commitment to merit as the bedrock principle of staff recruitment and development, but he needed to clarify some of the specific measures for strengthening the application of that principle, which must be supported by effective accountability and performance management. The vision of the Secretariat as a unified and mobile pool of talent without artificial barriers to access was appealing; the Secretary-General could remove most of the current barriers by changing the staff selection system. There was no reason why General Service staff should not be allowed to apply for posts not subject to geographical distribution. The proposal for a recruitment centre also had merit, for such proactive measures would facilitate the search for talented candidates from all over the world. In addition, greater efforts were needed to achieve gender parity in the Secretariat. Australia, Canada and New Zealand fully supported the proposals for more proactive recruitment and reduction of the recruitment period; the reform proposals in general would be stronger if accompanied by benchmarks for monitoring progress. They also supported in principle the creation of a cadre of 2,500 career civilian posts in peacekeeping operations, but the idea needed careful development; the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had outlined some of the issues requiring detailed consideration.

9. The ICSC report on the harmonization of conditions of service in the field was awaited with interest. There was indeed scope for improving the current system, but the Secretary-General's proposals had significant cost and administrative implications. The idea of streamlining contractual arrangements and the shift to continuing contracts also warranted support, but one key outcome must be the streamlining of the administration of contracts. The Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee were right to stress the importance of training to career and professional development. The Secretariat must be equipped with the best information technology, but any new system for human resources management must be compatible with the wider proposals on the subject. Since the reform of the internal justice system was a key part of the reform of human resources management, Australia, Canada and New Zealand looked forward to considering the report of the Redesign Panel at the resumed session.

10. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Group was very proud of the efforts made by the Secretary-General in the area of human resources management reform, which could transform the Secretariat into a truly international civil service. The Group hoped that the proposed reforms would empower the United Nations to cope with current and future challenges. The staff was indeed the Organization's biggest asset. Staff training was crucial and would pay dividends far into the future by ensuring optimal fulfilment of the mandates viewed as vital by the Member States. All staff must have equal access to training opportunities; she would welcome information on how that access would be provided and on the building-block approach to human resources management reform. The reforms could not succeed without a concerted effort by all States to perform the General Assembly's oversight functions and to consolidate the reforms once they were introduced.

11. The Committee should take a fresh look at the measures to ensure that programme managers were held accountable for failing to meet targets, in particular where equitable geographical representation was concerned. The large number of staff vacancies due to result from attrition and retirement up to 2010 must be properly managed in order to prevent any further deterioration in the representation of African countries in the Secretariat. The particularly poor representation of Africa at the senior levels must be addressed, but the proposals must take account of the peculiar problems of Africa: speeding up recruitment by advertising vacancies on the Internet and reducing the advertising time must not work against candidates from African and other developing countries where Internet access was limited. The African Group awaited further clarification of the proposal to create a dedicated recruitment unit but stressed that benchmarks would be needed to monitor progress.

12. As pointed out by the Management Performance Board and noted in paragraph 26 of the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform (A/61/228), overall performance in the areas of geographical representation and gender balance continued to fall short of the targets. One way to improve the gender balance was to give African women a fair chance to serve in the Organization, including in senior positions. The objective of the reforms should

be to establish a simpler and fairer recruitment and promotion system.

13. The African Group remained worried about the high vacancy rates in United Nations offices in Africa, a problem which might be alleviated through carefully managed mobility arrangements, including appropriate incentives and allowances; but the integrity of the staffing table and post structure must not be compromised. The United Nations should spare no effort to demonstrate much-needed leadership in the areas of accountability and administration of justice.

14. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) said that his delegation was concerned to note that the number of developing-country nationals at senior and policymaking levels was declining and that staff from those countries were unevenly distributed among Secretariat departments. However, with 1,759 individuals, including senior staff, due to retire within five years, the Secretariat should exploit the opportunity to improve geographical distribution, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/305 on human resources management. It was unfortunate that 22.4 per cent of the staff members recruited under the system of desirable ranges were from already over-represented Member States and that recruitment from national competitive examination rosters was very slow.

15. The Office of Human Resources Management must make recruitment and the allocation of posts subject to geographical distribution more transparent, monitor recruitment in each department and keep the Member States informed of the situation. While his delegation welcomed the fast-track project for recruitment from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, it believed that, because of the likely effect of attrition and reform of the scale of assessments, fast-track arrangements should be extended to States which were currently below the midpoint of their desirable range and were likely to become underrepresented in the future. The Management Performance Board should play a central role by formulating clear, transparent and feasible policies and rules.

16. His delegation was not in favour of the Secretary-General's proposal to reduce the advertising time for vacancies from 60 days to 30 days in some cases. It feared that, without well-defined improvement targets in other parts of the recruitment chain, such a reduction would not only fail to accelerate recruitment, but would unfairly affect candidates from Member States with less developed information technology systems. Alternatives included formulating a multifaceted recruitment strategy and starting the process of filling vacancies well in advance.

17. As the proposal to streamline the existing contractual arrangements by developing a single category of contract would affect the common system, his delegation would like ICSC to study it before any policy decisions were taken. For the same reason, ICSC should also examine the implementation of managed mobility, which would have financial implications and demand policy adjustments and improved administration of internal justice. However, a pilot managed mobility project could be carried out at the senior management level to share inter-agency experience and improve senior managers' leadership capacity.

18. The proposal to eliminate eligibility restrictions for staff in the General Service and related categories applying for certain Professional posts should be examined from the standpoint of optimizing the professional quality and age structure of Secretariat staff. Given the large number of candidates on the national competitive examination roster who were still awaiting recruitment, his delegation believed that the current restrictions should be maintained and the current practice of holding G to P examinations should continue. It would like more clarification of the proposal for a one-time staff buyout, as it was concerned about financial implications and wanted to receive assurances of transparency and effective monitoring.

19. The Chinese delegation felt that the reform of the conditions of service of peacekeeping staff should be discussed under the item relating to the common system, as ICSC proposed to set up a working group on that matter. It would also like further details on the relationship between the proposal to establish 2,500 permanent peacekeeping posts and other reform measures, such as implementing a mobility policy, streamlining contractual arrangements and harmonizing conditions of service. It was also concerned at the prospect of inequality between the permanent peacekeeping staff and other peacekeeping staff.

20. **Mr. Effah-Apenteng** (Ghana) said that he shared the Secretary-General's view that the Organization had become a field-oriented entity, as it had more staff in

field missions than at Headquarters. As mandates were becoming more complex and difficult, field staff must be appropriately remunerated. While the recommendation to introduce a single United Nations staff contract under a single set of rules was interesting, its implications should be examined so that delegations could take an informed decision on the matter. Mobility would be a valuable part of a comprehensive career development system, as it was necessary to cope with the Organization's ever-changing needs and mandates. The policy should be improved so that it would have the desired results.

21. No progress was being made in improving geographical distribution through the system of desirable ranges. Efforts in that regard must continue, as the measures introduced, which included special competitive examinations, preferential recruitment of screened candidates from developing countries, the proposal for a dedicated focal point for geographical distribution and special recruitment missions to unrepresented and underrepresented countries, had not yielded results. More women from developing countries should be recruited to posts in the Professional and higher categories.

22. The human resources indicators established should provide an overview of human resources development to enhance managers' work in that regard and broaden the use of human resources planning models throughout the Organization. The refocusing of staff development and learning programmes to meet the Organization's functional and operational needs was positive. While acknowledging that the Galaxy e-staffing system was an important human resources management tool, his delegation wished to know how it had improved recruitment, and more specifically how the Secretariat handled the large numbers of applications received while still upholding the principles of merit and transparency. It hoped that the system's deficiencies would be addressed, so that the recruitment process became competency-based and time-efficient.

23. **Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation shared the view that the United Nations no longer simply provided parliamentary, administrative and conference services, but was active in a wide range of fields, from human rights to development. It therefore required a versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service built on professionalism, integrity, accountability and transparency. It wished to recall the desire expressed by the General Assembly in its resolution 59/266 to see the Secretary-General improve managerial accountability for human resources management decisions, with sanctions for mismanagement or failure to adhere to established rules and procedures, while safeguarding individuals' right to due process.

24. Despite repeated appeals by the General Assembly, geographical distribution was even less equitable than in the past. Unrepresented countries had lost ground, the situation of underrepresented countries was unchanged and the number of staff from over-represented countries had increased. Between 2002 and 2006, only 6 appointments had been made from unrepresented countries, and 114 from underrepresented countries, yet 196 appointments had been made from over-represented States. Between July 2005 and June 2006, 15 out of 21 over-represented countries had seen their staff numbers increase. That situation did not reflect the spirit of Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter or of numerous General Assembly resolutions. The delegation of Bangladesh again wished to recall General Assembly resolution 59/266, which emphasized that geographical ranges applied to countries, rather than regions or groups. In the light of that resolution's reference to accountability mechanisms, it also wished to know what action would be taken to enforce accountability for wilful neglect of the issue of geographical distribution.

25. The Management Performance Board had concluded, at its meeting in July 2006, that performance continued to fall short in the areas of geographical distribution and gender balance with respect to the representation of developing countries at the senior and policymaking levels, his delegation wondered whether the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 41/206 A, 53/221, 55/258, 57/305 and 59/266 had been observed. Furthermore, recalling that the Secretary-General, in his report "Investing in people" (A/61/255), had pointed out the continuing practice of recruiting to leadership positions individuals who had too little experience of a complex, multicultural environment, the delegation of Bangladesh would like the Secretariat to clarify that situation.

26. Noting the rationale behind the proposals to reform the Field Service category (A/61/255/Add.1), his delegation called for serious consideration of the proposal to establish 2,500 career civilian positions in

peace operations. Procedures should be put in place to give nationals of troop-contributing countries priority for Field Service positions because of their experience, commitment and sacrifice.

27. **Ms. Dinić** (Croatia) said that, in order to fulfil the goals of reform, Member States, staff and management must work in partnership. Efforts must be made to attract and retain qualified personnel, particularly as more than half the staff were serving in field locations. Her delegation had long advocated the use of national competitive examinations to recruit young, qualified individuals. The Organization must work harder to speed up the recruitment process. As a global institution, the United Nations must ensure that all Member States were represented among its staff.

28. Recruitment, placement and promotion must take account of the crucial and complementary elements of geographical distribution, gender balance and individual merit. Women's representation had increased at the junior levels but not in senior-level posts, despite the abundance of qualified women candidates. Her delegation supported the view expressed in the Security Council, at its recent open debate on women and peace and security, that more women must be present among the civilian, police and military staff of peace operations, particularly at senior levels. It noted that few envoys or special representatives of the Secretary-General had been women, and called on Member States to put forward more qualified women candidates.

29. **Mr. Vijayaraghavan** (India) said it was vital that the United Nations should have a well-trained, adaptable and committed workforce in order to deal successfully with the increasing challenges and complexities with which it was confronted. The Organization needed an efficient recruiting system, but also a motivated staff. Achieving a balance between the two must be a collective endeavour based on a partnership between management and staff.

30. As noted by the Advisory Committee, the reports before the Committee contained a number of innovative ideas which required further development. His delegation looked forward to receiving the various other proposals to be submitted by the Secretary-General in 2007, including the relevant reports of ICSC. However, his delegation disagreed with the Advisory Committee's observation that the Secretary-General's increasing tendency to solicit the support of intergovernmental bodies for initiatives within his purview had the effect of blurring the lines between the policy-setting role of the General Assembly and the administrative responsibilities of the Secretary-General. It was his delegation's firm belief that the General Assembly should continue to be closely consulted by the Secretary-General on such initiatives in order to promote greater understanding and support on the part of Member States.

31. His delegation wished to reiterate its demand for the highest level of accountability within the Organization, particularly at the level of senior management, and to underscore the need for clear lines of authority. An operational system of incentives and sanctions must therefore be put in place, and the system of internal justice should be reformed. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report on the Management Performance Board (A/61/319), full implementation of measures to strengthen the performance assessment of senior managers would contribute significantly towards the achievement of genuine accountability. While welcoming the steps taken to establish an ethics and accountability framework, his delegation wished to express its concern at the establishment of an internal Oversight Committee comprising three senior officials, in contravention of Member States' demand that such a committee should be external to the Secretariat and report directly to the General Assembly.

32. His delegation did not fully understand why the Advisory Committee had cited Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations at the beginning of its comments on recruitment and staffing, since all Member States seemed to be perfectly aware of its applicability. While his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's emphasis on strategic workforce planning, it called for a fair, transparent and rule-based selection process in the United Nations, based on equitable geographical representation and with due regard for gender balance. According to the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/61/257), only about 40 per cent of posts at the senior and policymaking levels were occupied by staff from developing countries, even though developing countries constituted the overwhelming majority of the Organization's membership. It was perhaps time to rationalize the selection process, especially as the mathematical formula for calculating desirable ranges of representation gave undue weight to the budget

contributions of Member States, and was therefore contrary to the spirit of the Charter. The number of posts subject to geographical distribution should increase as the Secretariat and other implementing bodies grew in size.

33. The situation with respect to gender balance in the Secretariat was dismal. Gender parity had been achieved at the P-1 and P-2 levels only. His delegation therefore welcomed the incoming Secretary-General's assurances that he would work to redress the gender imbalance in the Organization, and was confident that his emphasis on merit would not prove an impediment with respect to achieving a balance between developing and developed countries or adhering to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, which had contributed to his own election.

34. India endorsed the proposal to use rosters of pre-screened candidates as the primary instrument for recruitment, placement and promotion, and called for strict monitoring of the central review bodies, whose functioning had been questioned by the Staff Union. It also supported the administering of national competitive and other pre-employment examinations, and agreed with the observations of the Advisory Committee concerning the Secretary-General's proposals on career development and building leadership and management capacity. However, it would seek further clarifications with respect to the Secretary-General's proposals on the establishment of a recruitment and staffing centre, mobility, contractual arrangements and the staff buyout plan.

35. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that a comprehensive analysis of the proposal to establish 2,500 career civilian positions in United Nations peace operations was essential. If the proposal was approved by the General Assembly, some preference in recruitment should be given to candidates from troop-contributing countries that had consistently demonstrated their commitment to the Organization and its peace missions. Lastly, his delegation strongly believed that human resources management reforms should not be undertaken in isolation by the Administration or Member States. Managers and staff should engage in constructive dialogue and exchanges of experience at every stage of the process.

36. **Mr. Sul** Kyung-hoon (Republic of Korea) said that the Secretary-General's report on investing in people (A/61/255) presented a persuasive vision of the Secretariat's future direction and contained many innovative and valuable ideas. His delegation shared the Advisory Committee's view that the Secretary-General should use his existing authority to carry out the mandates set by the General Assembly according to the means he considered best suited to each task. The role of the General Assembly should be to set mandates and hold the Secretary-General accountable for their execution. There must be clear lines of authority and corresponding accountability. Thus, an appropriate performance-appraisal system, with meaningful incentives and sanctions, must become an integral part of the personnel management system. Regular consultations between management and staff should be encouraged, and the underlying culture and work ethic of the Secretariat should be improved.

37. The current recruitment process was too slow and not sufficiently proactive. His delegation was encouraged by the Secretary-General's emphasis on strategic workforce planning, which should be made as accurate as possible. For such planning to be meaningful, it must be reflected in a relatively rapid recruitment and placement process, and far greater efforts must be made to ensure that candidates who passed the national competitive examination were placed promptly. The existing long waiting times could be attributed to delayed decision-making by managers, which was unacceptable.

38. The Republic of Korea attached great importance to geographical and gender balance in the Secretariat, and therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to ensure strict compliance with geographical and gender targets. The Office of Human Resources Management should play a more vigorous and proactive role in monitoring and addressing those organizational mandates, and senior managers should step up their efforts in that regard. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to develop a system of meaningful incentives to encourage mobility, but also shared the Advisory Committee's concerns about the potential administrative and management implications of greater mobility. The Secretary-General's report to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly on the first phase of the implementation of staff mobility should provide productivity and financial projections for future phases, as well as an assessment of the relevant administrative and management issues.

39. Stronger career development programmes were essential in order to attract and retain talented and dedicated staff and foster the leadership, creativity and versatility that the work of the Organization demanded. The Republic of Korea therefore supported the proposals for strengthened leadership and management recruiting, training and development. However, it would welcome the Secretariat's views on the Advisory Committee's recommendation that significant additional funds should not be provided until the Secretary-General had submitted information on the priorities, results and timetables for career development initiatives. There was an urgent need to improve human resources information technology. A new e-staffing tool should be developed, but in order to avoid repeating the Organization's experience with the Galaxy system, a comprehensive analysis of the scope and coverage of the system should be undertaken.

40. United Nations staff members served under a wide variety of contractual arrangements and were subject to widely divergent conditions of service. Contractual arrangements should be simplified and streamlined to ensure fair treatment of all staff. The Republic of Korea would be grateful to receive details on the proposed unified contract, including the relevant financial implications beyond 2007. However, as the proposal related directly to the issue of conditions of service in the field, it should be discussed in March 2007 in conjunction with the report of the ICSC working group on compensation packages for staff serving at non-family duty stations and the ICSC proposals for a harmonized approach within the United Nations system.

41. Implementation of the proposal to establish 2,500 career civilian positions in United Nations peace operations would enhance the professionalism of those operations and strengthen the Organization's ability to respond quickly to peacekeeping needs. As noted by the Advisory Committee in its report on human resources management (A/61/537), a clear methodology was needed for the apportionment of the related costs among the various sources of funding. Other areas that required clarification were the mix of skills required, the expected grade distribution, the selection process, the applicability of staff mobility measures and the management of the expanded capacity.

42. **Mr. Kamkum** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said his country supported human resources management reform and believed that equitable geographical distribution in the staffing of the Secretariat was an important matter. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was one of nine States that were underrepresented in posts subject to geographical distribution. That was a cause for concern, particularly in view of the large increase in the Jamahiriya's contribution. His country's representation in terms of posts encumbered had consistently been below the midpoint of the desirable range.

43. The appointment and selection process should ensure the independence of the international civil service. However, the current system did not provide the required transparency and accountability and should be reformed.

44. The goal of human resources management reform was to establish a comprehensive and fair system of recruitment and to achieve more equitable geographical distribution. To that end, the Office of Human Resources Management should take steps to ensure the equitable geographical distribution of posts and to increase the representation of Member States that were underrepresented or unrepresented in the Secretariat. The Office should also make special arrangements with those States to appoint some of their citizens to positions in the Secretariat and even to hold recruitment examinations in those States.

45. **Mr. Emam** (Saudi Arabia) said his delegation was disappointed by the lack of equitable geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat and by the fact that the number of underrepresented or unrepresented States had increased in recent years. Despite his country's efforts to have its nationals appointed to positions at the Secretariat, it remained one of the most underrepresented States in the Organization. In that regard, his country supported the Secretary-General's request for the establishment and maintenance of a special roster of candidates from unrepresented or underrepresented Member States. However, it did not support the proposal to reduce the advertising time for vacancy announcements to 30 days.

46. Saudi Arabia believed that training was important for professional development and should be mandatory for all occupational categories. The mobility programme, on the other hand, should be voluntary. If mobility had to be mandatory, then it should be mandatory for all occupational categories. The proposal that all contracts should be either temporary

or fixed-term appointments, on the one hand, or open-ended continuing appointments, on the other, required further study.

47. Voluntary buyouts should be offered in cases where separation from service would be in the interest of the Organization and was acceptable to the staff member. The policy should be implemented transparently and fairly in conjunction with an effective accountability system. His country agreed with ACABQ that an incentive system should be established and that recruitment rosters should be maintained. However, he noted that such rosters might grow too large to be of use, and asked the Secretary-General to create a policy for the maintenance and monitoring of those rosters in order to prevent their abuse. While his delegation welcomed the proposed Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, it remained concerned that the system would not solve the strategic problems that existed in many areas of human resources management.

48. **Mr. Tal** (Jordan) said that a methodical, gradual and well-thought-out approach should be taken to ensure substantive reform of human resources management at the United Nations. His delegation noted the proposals contained in the various reports of the Secretary-General and wished to commend the Secretariat on the level of detail contained in them, despite occasional redundancies. It would seek clarifications on the specifics of the reform proposals in the Committee's informal consultations.

49. Jordan appreciated the efforts of the Office of Human Resources Management to streamline rules and procedures, better utilize available information technology systems, improve the utilization of action plans, expedite recruitment and improve staff retention. The numerous proposals in the various areas of reform were rather complex, and their implementation, if not properly carried out, might result in the achievement of some goals at the expense of others. Jordan therefore hoped that the proposals would be implemented in a complementary manner. In its discussion of the proposals contained in the various reports, the Committee should be careful not to lose sight of long-term goals. None of the proposals should become an end in itself.

50. His delegation had noted that the Secretary-General's reports made repeated reference to the need for a change in culture. While such a change was necessary for the successful implementation of the reform proposals, it would take time to achieve and would require constant communication and exchanges of information among all stakeholders in order to overcome resistance and ensure a smooth transition. Moreover, the need for change was not limited to staff. It also included management, oversight bodies, the question of how Member States defined the future role of the Organization and the evolving role they might wish to play in achieving its goals, and the setting of future policy guidelines. Resistance to change should be expected, and great care should be taken to ensure that, in adopting some of the proposed reforms, Member States were not merely achieving consensus on paper, but making real and significant progress towards improving the overall management of human resources. Lastly, his delegation had noted that none of the reports on human resources management mentioned the employment of people with special needs. His delegation considered that issue to be of paramount importance, and would therefore welcome further information.

51. **Mr. Debabeche** (Algeria) said that human resources management reform was a particularly sensitive issue, dealing as it did with individuals and cultures. The Secretary-General's report (A/61/255) set out proposals on a new human resources framework based on the principles listed in paragraph 24 of the report. That approach implied that the Organization had only just begun to concern itself with those principles and that they had previously been neglected or flouted. If that was the case, it would explain the problems besetting human resources management at the United Nations.

52. The reform proposals had been authored by the Secretariat, apparently without input from ICSC. Rather than being marginalized, the Commission's mandate should be expanded beyond merely reviewing salaries and entitlements to include the establishment of a juridical framework for an international civil service which would attract the best and brightest candidates. Current human resources management procedures were piecemeal and complex and led to inequities among staff. He therefore welcomed the proposal to create a single type of contract as a means of ensuring equal treatment of staff. With regard to continuing contracts, he requested clarification of the conditions for termination of such contracts "in the

interest of the good administration of the Organization".

53. Noting the proposals to reform the Galaxy system, reduce advertising time to 30 days and develop rosters of pre-screened candidates, he said that goals such as greater transparency and equitable geographical distribution, a special concern of his delegation, could not be achieved unless the General Assembly played a greater role in monitoring recruitment to ensure that only the best candidates were selected and that no subjective considerations were taken into account. The experience of member States in that regard could perhaps be instructive.

54. In a truly fair system, there should be an appeals process for candidates who believed they had been treated unfairly. That would provide an avenue for righting any wrongs, strengthen accountability and put an end to calls for recruitment to be made an external process. He was not in favour of reducing the advertising time to 30 days, which would penalize candidates in developing countries, where information and communication technologies were less readily available. The establishment of rosters of pre-screened candidates would require recruitment deadlines to be observed, which was not currently the case, and notification of candidates that they were on the roster. Being on the roster was not, however, a guarantee that the pre-screened candidates would be able or willing to accept any post offered. His delegation would appreciate more information on such issues.

55. His delegation supported the rotation of managers responsible for procurement. The question of the recruitment of senior level management in general was an important one. The previous year his delegation had inquired as to the modalities for the appointment of the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet, who had since become the Deputy Secretary-General; the response had been that such appointments were made at the discretion of the Secretary-General. To the best of his knowledge there was no official document establishing such a policy and he regretted the General Assembly's failure to monitor such appointments more closely. The current practice should be terminated, all vacant posts should be advertised and the General Assembly should be involved in appointing candidates, although the Secretary-General should of course be free to appoint political advisers as needed.

56. Consideration should also be given to limiting the duration of senior appointments and applying the principle of geographical rotation to them. That would be in conformity with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 59/266 concerning equitable representation of Member States at the senior and policymaking levels of the Secretariat and the need to ensure that no post was considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State or group of States and that no national of a Member State succeeded a national of that State in a senior post.

57. The achievement of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with the wishes of the General Assembly, should not be difficult. Consideration should be given to establishing within the General Assembly a mechanism to hold senior managers accountable and to take whatever measures were necessary if the General Assembly's wishes were not implemented. It would be difficult to establish such a mechanism without the support of the Member States that currently predominated in the Secretariat. Their own unfavourable review of the current management system should make them more open to such a step.

58. He expressed concern that the developing countries were underrepresented at senior levels in the Secretariat, yet their assessments continued to increase. He requested information, disaggregated by country, on the amount of salaries and entitlements paid to staff. Those payments, together with the amounts spent for maintaining United Nations offices and services in a given country, undermined the argument that representation in the Secretariat should be linked to budgetary contributions.

59. No reform was possible without ongoing dialogue between management and staff representatives. The non-participation of New York staff representatives in consultations on reform raised doubts about the legitimacy of the process, and he called on both parties to renew contacts. Finally, he welcomed the whistleblower protection programme and the work done by the Ombudsman, in spite of limited resources.

60. **Mr. Vuong Dinh Van** (Viet Nam) said that his delegation appreciated the tremendous efforts made by the Secretary-General during his term of office and noted the tangible though modest reform achievements. It hoped that the creation of a global Secretariat would result in further harmonization of the United Nations system and that the reforms would help the

Organization to cope with the future's complicated demands. In particular, the reform of human resources management must be based on the highest standards of ethics, fairness, transparency, accountability, and staff and managerial performance, as well as on respect for diversity and geographical balance.

61. The working conditions and training of the staff must be improved. Staff mobility might create more opportunities for all staff members, but the arrangements must apply equally to Headquarters and field personnel and should not be allowed to disrupt the normal conduct of business.

62. Underrepresentation was a source of concern to many developing countries. In the case of Viet Nam, for example, only four of the eight posts to which it was theoretically entitled had been filled, yet four Vietnamese candidates were still awaiting recruitment four or five years after passing the national competitive examination. The 60-day advertising time must certainly not be shortened, and recruitment procedures should be further simplified so that they would be accessible to candidates from developing countries. It would also be useful for personnel in the National Officer category to be given opportunities to work at Headquarters and other duty stations in order to train to become international civil servants.

63. **Ms. Makhumula** (Malawi) said that United Nations staff must be competent, multi-skilled and versatile. Her delegation therefore applauded the Secretary-General's human resources reform programme, which was aimed at creating a productive, flexible and results-oriented Organization. She welcomed the career development and support policy outlined in the reports of the Secretary-General on investing in people (A/61/255) and on human resources management reform (A/61/228) and said the budgetary resources identified by the Secretary-General should be approved. She expressed concern, however, that despite some progress, the targets set for gender balance and geographical distribution had not yet been reached. Achievement of those targets should be a priority.

64. Mobility would contribute to greater integration and better understanding between Headquarters and the field, but it should not be imposed at the expense of institutional memory. The Secretariat should develop knowledge management practices that would preserve continuity, quality of service and institutional memory. She supported the introduction of three types of contracts — short-term, fixed-term and continuing — as a way to eliminate existing inequalities in contractual arrangements, but said that Member States should carefully study the new system in order to avoid creating new inequalities.

65. **Mr. Kovalenko** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation attached great importance to the implementation of an effective, flexible human resources policy framework that would maximize the efficiency of the Organization's staff. Human resources management reform must improve effectiveness, make rational use of scarce resources, meet the need for qualified personnel and enhance the Secretariat's performance.

66. The Secretary-General's proposals were largely geared to strengthening the system of career service in the Organization, particularly by extending it to peacekeeping personnel through the use of 100-series contracts. He questioned whether that approach was justified and whether investing in the training of a multi-skilled staff, including through mandatory mobility, at the expense of bringing "new blood" into the Organization by recruiting highly qualified specialists from outside was the best and most cost-effective way to equip the United Nations to meet contemporary challenges. That approach was out of step with modern human resources management practices and with the fast-changing demands being made on the Organization, particularly in the area of peacekeeping. In his delegation's view, the proposed reforms represented a very costly enterprise of dubious benefit to Member States.

67. In considering the proposal to establish a number of career posts in peace missions, the General Assembly should take account of the work of ICSC on harmonizing conditions of service in the field.

68. Although his delegation agreed that the contract conditions of United Nations staff must include a commitment to mobility and that the Secretary-General had the right to move staff as the requirements of the Organization demanded, it continued to be concerned at the introduction of compulsory, and therefore disorganized, mobility, which even included mobility between occupational groups. That source of concern, together with the lack of a clear vision of how mobility should be defined and implemented, did not bode well for the Organization's effectiveness and would

undoubtedly result in substantial and unjustified expenditure.

69. While there was some logic in the proposal to lift restrictions on movements between staff categories and between Headquarters and the field, the Russian delegation did not concur with it. First, it would involve international posts being unjustifiably filled by local staff selected under entirely different rules and possessing different skills and qualifications. Second, it would result in substantial and not always justifiable expenditure. Overall, the Secretariat's proposals seemed to have been motivated more by a desire to boost guarantees of employment and raise the cost of retaining staff than by a concern for enhancing flexibility, productivity and performance. The efficiency and effectiveness of the staff selection and placement system introduced in 2002 should be carefully analysed. the system had failed to bring in "new blood", and focused on consolidating a career service. A five-year review should be conducted, with input from managers.

70. The delegation of the Russian Federation was also reluctant to support the proposals aimed at stricter enforcement of geographical distribution rules, as the Secretariat seemed to have forgotten that the system consisted of "desirable" ranges that were already more strictly applied in the Secretariat than they were anywhere else in the United Nations system. Excessive emphasis on geographical considerations, without regard to the pattern of countries' representation at particular levels or in particular departments, ran counter to staff selection needs. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights had herself pointed out, the requirement for her Office to fill P-2 and P-3 vacancies exclusively from national competitive examination rosters was an obstacle to balanced geographical distribution and, however paradoxical it might seem, to the recruitment of developing-country nationals.

71. While it backed the idea of streamlining the Organization's system of contracts, his delegation would like assurances that the new continuing contracts would not become a kind of quasi-permanent contract that would supplant the fixed-term contract, which was, in its view, the most suitable instrument for managing human resources. It also hoped to receive more details on the use of rosters for recruitment, the proposed increase in expenditure on staff training and the proposed staff buyout.

72. **Mr. Kodera** (Japan) said that good human resources management was the foundation of any organization. Although the current human resources management system was having to face many new challenges, it was on the whole working well and had been modified from time to time as needed. Human resources management policy directly affected the performance of staff, and once a decision to institute reforms was taken, there would be no going back. The current system should therefore be carefully reviewed before any action was taken on the Secretary-General's proposals.

73. His delegation appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to consult staff and their representatives during the formulation of the proposed reforms. Any changes must be introduced as smoothly as possible. He therefore regretted that the New York Staff Union, which should be at the core of consultations, had not participated in that process. Contacts between staff groups and management should be renewed with a view to reaching a constructive outcome.

74. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on investing in people (A/61/255), he said that measures to speed up the recruitment and selection process were important, but they must be compatible with the principles of good management. He requested clarification of how pre-screened candidates would be matched with the job requirements of specific posts. The eligibility requirements in the current staff selection system, including geographical criteria, served a real purpose and his delegation would have strong reservations if the Secretary-General sought to remove geographical criteria from the staff selection system.

75. He wondered how the proposed new contractual arrangements based on one staff contract under one set of rules would affect the methodology for calculation of desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category and above set out in General Assembly resolution 42/220 A. That approach to improving conditions of service in the field had not been envisaged by ICSC. The proposed new arrangements must therefore be carefully scrutinized in order to ensure an appropriate balance in remuneration among common system agencies.

76. The proposal to harmonize conditions of service in the field likewise required further study. There was a major difference between the number of staff working

in peace operations and the number working in other organizations of the common system. He wondered how many international staff working for peace missions and their families could be accommodated in their proposed administrative place of assignment without the provision of considerable management capacity in those locations. The Committee should wait for the report of ICSC to be submitted the following spring before it addressed that important issue.

77. The necessity of establishing 2,500 career civilian positions in peace operations was not immediately apparent to his delegation. He asked what advantage there would be in such a system for the Organization or the staff members concerned, and how the number 2,500 had been arrived at. Any such initiative should be evaluated in a holistic manner, taking into account the fact that current field missions were maintained by a combination of international and local staff.

78. Both Member States and the Secretariat must redouble their efforts to improve geographical distribution. Managers must be committed to achieving geographical targets and the Office of Human Resources Management must play a stronger role in ensuring that decisions on recruitment and promotion were taken bearing in mind the principle of geographical distribution. He therefore welcomed the proposals to mainstream the fast-track recruitment procedure and strengthen the Office's authority in that regard.

79. Mobility and career development were important aspects of human resources management. The large number of retirements in the next few years should prompt the Secretariat to hasten the formulation of a policy to enhance management. He cautioned, however, that the idea of investing heavily in career development, which in the past had been left to the discretion of staff, was a dramatic policy shift. Mobility and career management must be closely coordinated and targets and workplans should be organized well in advance so as to avoid any problems.

80. **Mr. Sadouk** (Morocco) welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to improve human resources management in order to better meet the challenges of the future. One area in need of reform was the recruitment process, which was too complex. That process must be simplified and both internal and external recruitment must be made more transparent. The Organization's staff was its greatest asset; in order to optimize its performance there must be greater investment in training and a focus on ethics, fairness, transparency and accountability. Although he supported the principle of mobility between Headquarters and the field as a means of promoting flexibility, mobility should be voluntary and not imposed. Incentives should be used to encourage mobility, which should apply to all staff without distinction.

81. He expressed concern at the underrepresentation of developing and transition countries in the Secretariat; innovative new measures must be adopted to ensure fair geographical distribution. Greater efforts must also be made to achieve gender balance, including at senior levels, and more women from the developing countries should be recruited. Finally, he stressed the need to place increased emphasis on accountability in the Organization and its programmes.

82. **Mr. Safaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Organization's staff was its greatest asset; human resources management reform must therefore be an ongoing process aimed at defining clear lines of responsibility and accountability and meeting the highest standards of ethics, managerial excellence, performance, justice and diversity. He supported the Secretary-General's efforts to rejuvenate the Secretariat as a means of preparing for the challenges ahead.

83. He was concerned, however, by the Secretariat's failure to achieve geographical and gender balance, especially at senior levels. The proposed dedicated recruitment service should be accountable to Member States for the achievement of such targets. Regular consultations between it and Member States would likewise improve accountability and transparency in the recruitment process. Although he agreed that the current recruitment process was too long, he was concerned that a reduction in advertising time would prevent candidates from the developing countries from competing on an equal footing. Instead, time could be saved through improved coordination and planning and in other phases of the process. Finally, he welcomed the mobility programme as an appropriate way to transfer skills to new staff; the principle of mobility should, however, apply to all staff at all levels without discrimination.

84. **Ms. Pataca** (Angola) said that her delegation attached great importance to human resources management reform, particularly with regard to the

issue of equitable geographical representation. It appreciated the introduction of a new human resources framework which would hold managers and staff accountable for implementing the principles of merit-based recruitment and career development and for complying with mandates on geographical distribution, gender balance and ethical standards.

85. Accountability and transparency in the recruitment and selection process were significant factors, as was the clear definition of the responsibilities of the central review bodies in the recruitment and selection process, which must continue to be monitored. Candidates placed on rosters should not experience long delays when posts had already been identified. Although the Galaxy system had its merits, it still needed improvement in order to handle effectively the large volume of applicants. In spite of the Organization's efforts to address the issue of unrepresented and underrepresented countries, the problem persisted. Reform measures should ensure that there was no opportunity for the preferential treatment of candidates. The large number of retirements over the next three years should open up increased opportunities for candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries.

86. Planning and coordination were essential for improving recruitment. Considering the disadvantages of unrepresented and underrepresented countries with respect to technology and the timely dissemination of information, proper planning should include due consideration of the duration of advertising for vacancies. Her delegation therefore did not support the proposal to reduce advertising time.

87. Angola supported the Secretary-General's proposal to develop gender mainstreaming programmes for senior and middle management, as well as his proposals aimed at promoting gender sensitivity, awareness of diversity and cross-cultural sensitivity among General Service staff. Several General Assembly resolutions had expressed concern at the lack of a well-defined accountability framework in the United Nations. The current fragmented system was hard to understand and had been only partially implemented. It was therefore of critical importance to improve accountability before delegating further authority to managers.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.